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HERTFORDSHIRE'S

Pints of View

The bi-monthly publication for the discerning real ale drinker

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New McMullen's Brewery Opens



McMullen's new £1m brewery was officially opened by Mike Benner, Chief Executive of CAMRA, at a launch held on Wednesday 19 April, on what was a landmark day for McMullen's.

See full story – page 9

Pictured left to right: Chris Evans (McMullen's Head Brewer), Mike Benner (CAMRA chief Executive) and Fergus McMullen (McMullen Production & Sales Director) load in the hops to give the McMullen's beer its distinctive taste.



Also In This Issue:

- South Herts CAMRA Pubs of the Year
- 425 years of brewing heritage lost
- Possible effects of a smoking ban

Rise in Duty a Blow for Beer Drinkers

The Chancellor's decision to freeze champagne duty while increasing beer duty in today's budget as a slap in the face for Britain's beer drinkers, CAMRA had called for a freeze or a decrease in excise duty. This would have reduced the gap between excise duty in the UK and the rest of Europe, enhanced the viability of community pubs, and removed some of the profit from overseas alcohol smuggling.

This increase is a blow to pubs and consumers; even a small increase in excise duty translates into a disproportionate cost for the consumer.

High costs discourage people from visiting the pub as frequently, therefore putting the viability of community pubs at risk and threatening the livelihood of licensees.

Naturally conditioned beer is our traditional drink and as the World Cup is being held in Germany, it's outrageous that the Chancellor has frozen duty on champagne. We hope millions of English drinkers can look forward to toasting England's success in the summer with a good pint of British real ale – not champagne.

CAMRA has welcomed the freeze on cider duty which will help support Britain's 150 small independent Cider and Perry producers.

MPs Call for Tax Relief to be Extended for Small Brewers

There are now 570 small and regional brewers in the UK compared to only 440 in 2002, when Small Breweries' Relief was introduced. There is now greater choice than at any time since CAMRA was founded in 1971.

Small Breweries' Relief means small brewers pay reduced tax on the beer that they produce. Under the current system all brewers producing less than 60,000 hectolitres a year benefit. Tax relief has led to more consumer

choice, with 29% growth in small breweries.

Liberal Democrat MP Greg Mulholland (Leeds North West) has tabled Early Day Motion No.1955, backing Small Breweries' Relief, and is calling for the threshold to be extended up to 200,000 hectolitres, so that even more brewers can benefit. So far, 37 MPs have signed the EDM

It is a sad fact that over 80% of the beer drunk in the UK is produced by four global brewers. Small Breweries' Relief is crucial in helping Britain's small and regional brewers compete against the huge economic muscle of the global brewers.

Thirteen EU countries provide tax relief for small breweries producing up to 200,000 hectolitres annually and CAMRA is urging Britain to follow the lead of other beer-loving nations such as Germany.

Mr Mulholland said: "The relief for small breweries is of course welcome. It has helped micro-breweries produce many excellent brews.

However there are small independent breweries that do not currently qualify for such relief. There is currently a perverse disincentive to be successful. We should not be holding these independent brewers back in this way."

The 13 countries that have tax relief for smaller breweries producing up to 200,000 hectolitres a year are:

Germany, Czech Republic, Belgium, Denmark, Greece, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Portugal, Slovakia, France, Poland, Netherlands, and Malta.

Examples of some breweries that could benefit from an extension of Small Breweries Relief are:

Black Sheep, Brains, Butcombe, Caledonian Camerons, Everards, Hardys & Hansons, Harveys, Holts, Hop Back, Hydes, Lees, Ringwood, Timothy Taylor, and Wadworth.

Hertfordshire's Pints of View is produced by the South Hertfordshire and Watford & District Branches of the Campaign for Real Ale (CAMRA). Views expressed are not necessarily those of the editor, CAMRA Ltd or its branches.



CAMRA South Herts Pubs of the Year

The competition to select the best pub in the county has been running for over twenty years. The South Hertfordshire Shield with its twenty five plates is now full and we are pleased that it will be permanently on display in the **Woodman** in Wildhill - this year's winner. A new shield will of course be bought and the prestigious competition continued.

The runner-up was the **Old Cross Tavern** in Hertford which also won in 1999 and it is pleasing to note that the **White Lion**, St Albans came a worthy third and will be receiving a commendation.

The Awards took place at the Old Cross 25th April, Woodman 2nd May and the White Lion on 10th May.



Landlord Graham (left), CAMRA South Herts Chairman Phil Defriez display the awards. Also here are Graham's wife Ros, doppelgänger, and son Tom.

This year we have run the competition differently; having the 350 pubs on the branch area short listed and then an intensive survey undertaken by a panel of judges elected by the branch. Pubs were surveyed on the consistent quality of their beers, community involvement, service and pricing policy. The competition when you get to the shortlist is fierce, and as the award is for what the pub has achieved in the last year means it is always retrospective - this year is for 2005. Again it is incredibly hard to consistently meet the exceedingly high standards and you will note from the chart on page 5 that often the same pubs will win. The Woodman, this year's winner, is no exception, having won seven times since the start of the competition.

The Woodman, Wildhill - Winner

The 2nd of May saw a large contingent of CAMRA members and locals celebrate the Woodman's deserved victory as South Herts CAMRA's 'Pub of the Year'. The event was special in another way as the Bentley collectors club also visited on the same night and displayed some amazing classics in concourse condition. It is the seventh time the pub has won, more than any other in the history of the award. CAMRA's **2006 Good Beer Guide** describes 'The Woodman' as a "small, friendly village pub that specialises in beers from micro-breweries near and far, and offers up to three guest beers at a time." Graham and Ros Craig have run the pub for over two decades, and Graham, on hearing that the pub has won the award for a record seventh time said: "I'm absolutely delighted

Cont'd



for the pub and customers, but particularly for my son Tom who now works with me, and has a considerable input into the running of the pub, the choice of beers and cellar management”.




The Bentleys outside the Woodman

The Woodman is now entered for the Hertfordshire Pub of the Year competition. If it is successful here, it is eligible to compete in the Regional round that, in turn, would take the pub through to CAMRA's National Pub of the Year competition.

Old Cross, Hertford – Runner up

No stranger to Branch accolades over the last six years, once again the Old Cross Tavern in Hertford featured high in the voting, this year securing the Runner-Up position. Branch members and regulars were at hand to witness Branch Chairman, Phil Defriez, present landlord Nigel Beviss with the award. Phil cited Bev's unswerving commitment to real ale as one of the reasons that why the Old Cross Tavern is so popular – a free house in the true sense of the words. Brilliantly kept beer, always of an interesting selection, served in convivial surroundings without the intrusion of music, TV or gaming machines and where unhindered conversation is allowed to pass the hours. With twice-annual beer festivals and a fine reputation for its lunchtime food, the Old Cross Tavern fits easily with CAMRA's views on what a great pub should be. Well done to Bev, Mary and all the staff at the Old Cross.

	Old Cross Tavern <i>"The Way Pubs Used to Be"</i> 8 St. Andrew Street, Hertford Tel: 01992 583133
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White Lion, St Albans – Runner up

It is the first time the White Lion has featured in the top three, a significant achievement for landlord David Worcester after two years at the Sopwell Lane pub. The original building is very old and Grade II listed, with two separate bars - one of which was enlarged in the 1980's. There is also a large secluded garden with a boules court. Since David's arrival the pub has been revitalised and is in an area of the town where there is a lot of competition for trade. He has improved the range and quality of the beer, food and service, returning the pub to a great community local. The beer range from a variety of micro and independent brewers is always changing, with up to six beers available dependant on demand.

A large number of CAMRA activists and locals celebrated the award presentation at the pub on Wednesday 10th May.



Phil Defriez (right) and landlord Bev of the Old Cross with the Runner-Up plaque



Phil Defriez – again (!) and landlord David of the White Lion with the Runner-Up plaque.

This Year's Winners across Hertfordshire:

Herts/Essex Borders - Queens Head, Allens Green

Mid Chilterns - Kings Arms, Tring

North Hertfordshire - Our Mutual Friend, Stevenage

South Hertfordshire - The Woodman, Wildhill

Watford & District - Land of Liberty, Peace & Plenty, Heronsgate

Enfield & Barnet - The Wonder, Enfield

Previous South Hertfordshire Winners:

1999	Old Cross Tavern	Hertford
2000	Woodman	Wildhill
2001	Carpenters Arms	Harpenden
2002	Woodman	Wildhill
2003	Woodman	Wildhill
2004	Carpenters Arms	Harpenden
2005	Woodman	Wildhill

Any comments, articles or letters for publication are welcome.

Please send to: Steve Bury, 14 New Road, Shenley, Herts, WD7 9EA.

Or Email us at:

pintsofview@yahoo.co.uk



CAMRA Celebrates its 35th Anniversary

The Campaign for Real Ale now has 80,000 members and has achieved successes promoting real ale, cider and the traditional pub to ensure they have the healthy future they deserve.

History

CAMRA was formed in 1971 after six large national brewers (Allied Breweries, Bass Charrington, Courage/John Smiths, Scottish and Newcastle, Watney and Whitbread) set about replacing cask ale with inferior pressurised keg beer in the UK.

During a holiday in Ireland four friends – journalists Michael Hardman, Graham Lees and Bill Mellor, along with brewery employee

Jim Makin – bemoaned the dreadful standard of beer back home and decided to set up the Campaign for the Revitalisation of Ale. An enthusiastic response warranted an EGM in Nuneaton in 1972 and 20 people turned up. By the time of the second AGM in 1973 there were more than 1,000 members on the books, and the name of the organisation was changed to the more pronounceable Campaign for Real Ale.

Successes:

- ✓ No new ale breweries were set up in the UK in the fifty years before CAMRA was founded. There are now around 400 new brewers producing real ale, part of a massive real ale revival.
- ✓ CAMRA lobbied the government to introduce Progressive Beer Duty which has helped hundreds of small brewers to compete with larger brewing companies.
- ✓ CAMRA members have successfully defeated several brewery take-overs (which includes our part in the save Mac's campaign).

- ✓ In the last couple of years CAMRA was instrumental in ensuring the introduction of more liberal licensing laws introduced in England, Scotland and Wales.
- ✓ CAMRA got brewers to declare the strengths of their beers, and are close to success in seeing listing of beer ingredients.

CAMRA today

- ✓ The largest consumer organisation in Europe, with 80,000 members in 200 branches across the UK. CAMRA was given *super complainer* status in 2005, enabling it to have grievances over measures such as market dominance investigated by watchdogs within 90 days.



✓ CAMRA hosts beer festivals across the UK, including the Great British Beer Festival which will be held at Earl's Court from August 1st – 5th 2006 and the St Albans Beer Festival held at the Alban Arena, 27th - 30th September 2006.

✓ Organises National Pubs Week, the National Pub of the Year competition, CAMRA Pub Design awards and several other important events in the beer calendar.

✓ Publishes several highly successful books and guides,

including the Good Beer Guide edited by Roger Protz.

- ✓ Continues to campaign against brewery takeovers and consolidation in order to preserve consumer choice.

The Future

In addition to campaigning against brewery consolidation and encouraging sales of real ale, cider, and perry:

- ✓ CAMRA continues to campaign for a full



pint and to close legal loopholes that allow bars and pubs to serve less than 100 per cent t liquid.

- ✓ CAMRA wants to see national planning guidance in place to require local authorities to introduce policies to retain community public houses.
- ✓ At the moment a pub can be converted for a change of use without the need for planning permission. The law must be changed so any change of use resulting in the loss of a pub requires planning permission.
- ✓ Excise duty must be reduced and the reductions passed on to the customer to encourage people to visit the pub and stem the flood of cheap alcohol crossing the English Channel.
- ✓ CAMRA will continue to lobby the Government to retain Progressive Beer Duty.

New Beer From Sawbridgeworth

We have received a message from Jan Mead the Chair of RACS (the Real Ale Club of Sawbridgeworth) who are affiliated to our sister organisation the SPBW (Society for Preservation of Beers from the Wood).



The Gate in Sawbridgeworth

They are based at the **Gate** in Sawbridgeworth, which brews on the premises, and the latest brew is called RACS to commemorate the society. It is 4% ABV and is a light hoppy ale sold only at the pub.

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425 Years of London Brewing Heritage to be Lost

The Campaign for Real Ale (CAMRA) is disappointed by the announcement on 23rd May that Young's will close the Ram Brewery in central Wandsworth and move production to Bedford by October 2006.

Young's has set up a joint venture with Charles Wells Brewery to brew its beers at the Eagle Brewery in Bedford, and despite assurances that the two companies will continue to operate their respective pub estates independently CAMRA is very concerned over the possible implications of the move.

The merger deal will create a new company, Wells & Young's Brewing Company Limited, which will begin operations in October - owned 60% by Wells and the rest by Young's. However CAMRA takes some reassurance from the fact that Young's will remain a vertically integrated company.

CAMRA Chief Executive Mike Benner said: "We have known for some time that Young's could not continue at its present site, but we held out hope that efforts to find a suitable local alternative would

bear fruit and not spell the death of more than four centuries of brewing tradition in Wandsworth.

"CAMRA wants assurances that every one of the beer brands produced by both Young's and Charles Wells will have a secure future, and that the identity of Young's 208-strong pub estate and Charles Wells' 248 pubs will be safeguarded.

"We would also urge Young's to be upfront

about where its beers are brewed and not try to pass itself off as a London brewery. It is a tremendous loss for London drinkers and a great shame that there

is only one substantial real ale brewer left in the nation's capital in the form of Fuller's."

CAMRA's London Regional Director Steve Williams said: "I am greatly disappointed that London and Wandsworth will be losing their flagship brewery. Another great brewery that has produced fine beers for hundreds of years is lost in the name of progress.

"However, looking forward, I am hopeful that the Young's beers out of Bedford will prove to be as tasty and first rate as those that have quenched the thirst of London's beer drinkers for many years."

Some facts about Young's and Charles Wells

YOUNG'S: Beer has been brewed at the Ram Brewery on the River Wandle since 1581, making

it the oldest site in Britain for continuous beer production. It supplies more than 500 free-trade outlets and has a tied estate of 208 pubs. It entered into talks with Wandsworth Council in 2003 after the site was earmarked for redevelopment.

Young's beers include: Young's

Bitter, Special, Special London Ale, Champion Live Ale, Waggledance, Winter Warmer.

CHARLES WELLS: The largest independent family owned brewery in the country. Established in 1876 and at its current site since 1976. Owns 248 pubs and supplies a large number of other outlets.

Charles Wells beers include: *Eagle IPA, Bombardier and John Bull Finest Bitter.*



Young's Brewery – from www.owenbillcliffe.co.uk



McMullen's New Brewery Opens



Mcmullen's new £1m brewery was officially opened by Mike Benner, Chief Executive of CAMRA, at a launch held on Wednesday 19 April. On what was a landmark day for McMullens, Fergus McMullen said "This is such a positive day for McMullen's, as it reinforces our long-term commitment to remain as an independent company in Hertford, not only running good pubs but also brewing our own unique range of cask ales". The brewery has been formed from existing warehousing space to the rear of offices in Hartham Lane, Hertford and will have an annual output of 15,500 barrels – almost all of which will be cask-conditioned ale. At any one time it has a capacity range of 30 to 120 barrels. Head brewer Chris Evans has overseen the construction of the new brewery and in the months before the official launch, trial brewing has led to a gradual transfer of brewing from the 1980s brewery to the brand new plant. Chris said "Our new brewhouse not only means I can still brew our well-loved AK and Country Best Bitter, but it also allows me the flexibility to brew smaller runs of seasonal varieties of cask ale. This gives extra choice to our Managed, Tenanted and Free Trade Customers".

The new brewery becomes Mac's fifth in Hertford during their 180-year history, the listed but now largely ornamental Victorian tower brewery still a remarkable sight on Hertford's skyline. It was in 1827 that Peter McMullen first started brewing in Back Street (now Railway Street). In 1832 brewing was transferred to the Mill Bridge Brewery. The tower brewery of 1891 followed to be largely replaced in 1982 by a fourth brewery further down Hartham Lane.

Fergus continued, "I know we are bucking the trend by building a new brewery as the facts on brewery closures are frightening – we are becoming an endangered species – six have closed since the start of 2005 and a staggering 39 since 1995!".

However, Fergus is tremendously upbeat about the benefits that the new investment will bring them. "The cask ales we will brew from the new brewery will give us a point of difference with the ever increasing number of pubs that no longer sell cask ales. We believe there is a healthy future for pubs selling local beer from your local brewery. The new brewery will enable us to be a cost-effective producer – an essential factor in today's increasingly competitive market. History shows that once companies close their breweries they lose their soul and a culture which we believe adds long term value to the way pubs are run".

A tour of the new brewery showed that almost all of the brewing plant and equipment is brand new and is laid out in a very traditional and pleasingly recognisable way – over two floors, where the brewing process starts on the top floor, flowing to the ground floor.

Cont/d

The Mermaid



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There are hot liquor tanks, mash tuns, hopbacks, boilers and fermenting vessels. The traditions are certainly not lost on McMullens – their beers will continue to be made from East Anglian malted barley, English hops from Kent and Worcestershire, their own special ale yeast, and water from Mac’s own wells deep underground in Hertford.

If *AK* and *Country* remain Mac’s stock beers, they are now actively investigating the possibility of a third. This may take some time to materialise at the bar but will be welcomed by local CAMRA members and drinkers who have been increasingly impressed with

the seasonal beers that have emerged from Mac’s in the last few years. The recent *Maypole* is of particular note. Following on from this will be *Pride of Lions* (4.0%ABV) – a light refreshing hoppy session bitter, brewed with whole leaf aroma hops from Kent. In August, *Harvest Moon* (4.0%ABV) will be the seasonal beer available.

And Mac’s ultimately have their eyes on CAMRA’s prestigious “**Champion Beer of Britain**” award - they are proud of the accolades that they have won in the past – UK brewer of the year in 1995 (as voted by the British Guild of Beer Writers); *Country Bitter* in 1996 voted top in the British Industry International awards. They hope this new chapter in brewing will help lead to CAMRA’s top award in the future. McMullens will be returning in a big way to the **Great British Beer Festival** at Earl’s Court this year with their own stand and they are now appearing more widely at other not-too-distant festivals. There is not much news on the pub front. Managing Director, Peter Furness-Smith said that despite a rigorous look into opportunities for acquisition, no new buys were around the

corner, the market being somewhat over-inflated at the moment. Mac’s continue to look for fresh chances in the Free Trade.

CAMRA was well represented at the official opening with a significant contingent from HQ and Branch Chairs from South Herts, North Herts, Herts/Essex Borders and Enfield and Barnet branches. A buffet lunch was provided and top condition *Country*, *AK* and *Maypole* beers helped



The Mac’s wagon outside the new brewery

the conversation flow. It was a tremendous opportunity to meet with so many people from the brewery. Hopefully these new contacts will lead to increased bonds

between CAMRA and Mac’s – there is so much that we can help each other with.

On a day when the enticing aroma of hops was gently tinting the air in the local streets, we were reminded that McMullens’ new venture aims to keep them at the forefront of local brewing, turns a page in their rich tradition, and sets course for a secure and bright future as a quality cask brewer.

Macs Double Whammy!

M McMullens have won **two** CAMRA Pubs of the Year awards in one branch – Enfield & Barnet. Enfield’s Pub of the Year is **The Wonder**, (Batley Road, EN2), and Barnet’s Pub of the Year is the **Sebright Arms** (Alston Road, EN5). The overall winner was the Wonder. Reasons for these pubs winning are that they are very much unspoilt, serve the local community well, are friendly, and have public bars. Dave Tennant, landlord of the Sebright is also a CAMRA member.

Subscriptions for Pints of View
 £5 for 18 issues. Send to: John Lightfoot, 66 Dryfield Road, Edgware, Middx., HA8 9JT. Cheques payable to: CAMRA South Herts.



Pints of View CAMRA Sudoku

H		P						R
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	P	S	D				R	
E						S		I

Fill in all the squares in the grid so that every row, column and each of the nine 3x3 squares contain all the letters of the word **HARDSPILE**.

Completed entries by 1 August to: Steve Bury, 14 New Road, Shenley, Herts, WD7 9EA.

1st winner drawn wins a CAMRA 2006 Good Beer Guide. 2nd and 3rd winners drawn win a 2005 St. Albans Beer Festival T- Shirt.

Winners of the Pints of View Beer Sudoku in Edition 215: **1st prize winner** (2006 Beer Guide 2006) – Pete Durrant, Clifton. **2nd and 3rd prize winners** (St. Albans 2005 Beer Festival T-Shirt) – Martin Coleman, Harlow, Essex and Stephen Clark, Hertford.

SOLUTION BELOW:

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E	S	A	G	O	L	T	N	R
L	G	N	R	A	T	S	E	O
T	R	O	E	S	N	L	A	G



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Viewing from 7pm



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The Great British Beer Festival – Tue 1st to Sat 5th August. **Opening Times:** 5pm-10:30 (1st), 12 noon – 10:30 pm (2nd – 4th), 11 am – 7pm (5th)

Cost: for CAMRA members £5 (£4 Sat). Non-Members £7 (£6 Sat).

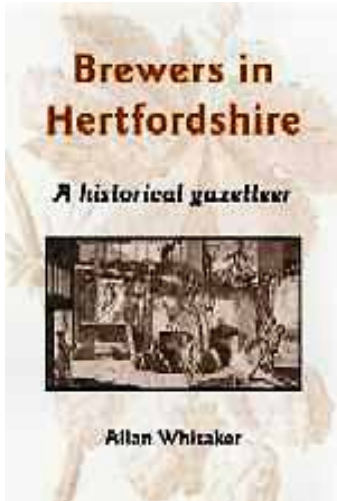
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Let us know what you think of any pubs at pintsofview@yahoo.co.uk

Brewers in Hertfordshire "A Historical Gazetteer"

It was Thursday 30th March and I, as *Pints of View* editor, was pleased to be invited to the launch of the book "Brewers in Hertfordshire" at the Watford Museum, which is housed in the old Benskin's Brewery offices in the Lower High Street. The book contains a foreword from Fergus McMullen, one of the directors of the Herford independent brewer, who had kindly supplied a good quantity of bottled Castle Ale to toast the occasion. I was fortunate to meet Dr Allan Whitaker the author who has taken nine years to collect the incredible amount of information contained in the book. The introduction sets the scene by giving a background to brewing and malting in the county and explains the early processes.



The acknowledgements take two pages and I am not surprised as the gazetteer contains not only details of all this county's breweries from the 1700's to present day, but also lists the pubs they owned or leased. Thirty-one towns and villages in Hertfordshire are indexed all of which have had working breweries at one time, and to add icing on the cake, Allan has also researched seven other brewers in surrounding counties of Bucks, Beds, Essex and Middx. Everything within is indexed and cross-referenced, with photos, diagrams and tables bringing the text to life. There are interesting historical stories accompanying the

brewery descriptions. For example George Cathrow, who owned the Hoddesdon brewery, died in 1842 and stipulated in his will that a free barrel of beer should be kept filled outside the brewery for passers-by to drink. As you can imagine the local pub landlords complained about loss of trade and it led to disturbances. This benevolent practice was soon stopped. The Kingsbury Brewery in St Albans whose buildings still stand intact on the corner of Verulam Road and Branch Road is shown in an aerial map from 1898, when it was bought out by Benskins. For Real Ale lovers and local historians this book is a must, as a single comprehensive source for information about Hertfordshire brewing, available at your fingertips. We are hoping that Dr Allan Whitaker will be doing a book signing at the **St Albans Beer Festival** in September, my advice is do not wait that long, buy the 328-page copy through the publishers University of Hertfordshire: Tel: 01707 284654, fax: 01707 284666 or Email - uhpress@herts.ac.uk. Price is £14.99 (paperback).

Steve Bury

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Regular beer festivals



Banning Smoking in English Pubs: What the Trade Press Has to Say

By Andrew Vaughan

On Tuesday 14th February Britain's MPs voted to ban smoking in all enclosed public places in England; paving the way for legislation later in the year and the possible introduction of a ban in the summer of next year. Although there are on-going attempts to reverse this decision they seem unlikely to succeed, with licensed-trade bodies such as the British Beer and Pub Association dropping attempts to prevent the ban in favour of ways of mitigating its effects. The question now is what will be the effect of a smoking ban on English pubs?

Many in the licensed trade are fearful of a ban because they believe that it will drive away their smoking customers, who may simply choose to smoke and drink at home. Pubs with beer gardens or other outdoor spaces may be able to avoid the loss of these customers by erecting smoking shelters; and indeed, companies that specialise in pub garden revamps have reported a surge in

interest since the vote. Also, pubs that offer meals may find themselves at an advantage after the ban, as it has been reported that food sales increase after such a pub goes non-smoking, which could compensate for a drop in trade caused by smokers staying away. Breweries and other pub owning companies are encouraging the exploitation of outside areas and food as ways to avoid the worst effects of the ban, and believe that it is those pubs that do not have outside areas or that do not serve meals, that are likely to suffer the most afterwards. Although it's assumed that trade will decrease in pubs as smokers stay away the actual results of a ban can't be known until after the ban is in place, but the industry in England has been studying the effects of the bans in the Republic of Ireland and, more recently, Scotland to see if anything can be learned from their experiences. The pub industry in both of these countries is quite different to that of England but, nevertheless, comparisons can be drawn.

Information on the effects of the ban in the Irish

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Republic has been confused at best, with government statistics claiming no significant effect, and trade surveys claiming catastrophic sales slumps. A more recent set of statistics from the business consultancy CIL indicated that the post-ban decline in alcohol sales in pubs in the Irish Republic could have been just part of a longer term trend caused by price increases, which suggests that the effects of a smoking ban won't be as severe as is currently thought.

The recent ban on smoking in public places in Scotland may provide a more useful model for any future experiences in England. Many of the pub-owning companies that run estates in England also have properties in Scotland and similar business practices north of the border. Also, a large percentage of Scottish bars have no associated land and do not serve food, so may act as a good model for similar English pubs. The ban

began on Sunday 26th March and the effect on turnover in pubs and bars has been initially encouraging. A recent Morning Advertiser poll of pubs across Scotland found that the majority of the 50 licensees surveyed reported no change or an increase in trade since the ban. The Morning Advertiser poll reported that even pubs that did not serve food found that their trade increased, with some landlords saying that new customers were visiting who had previously stayed away because of the smoke. On the other hand, recent figures published by Enterprise Inns reported a slight decline in drinks sales and fruit machine revenue, two areas that a smoke ban was expected to hit hard, leading CEO Ted Tuppen to state that licensees north of the border were having to work harder for the same return. It's probably still too early to tell what the full effects of the Scottish ban will be, some pubs have reported decreases in

turnover of up to 50%, but initially the results look encouraging for pub businesses in England as most reports are positive and the decline in trade experienced by Enterprise Inns' pubs was only described as marginal.

The Scottish ban has produced at least one problem, though. The Scottish Assembly brought in the ban but has little influence over planning decisions, which are the responsibility of local councils. Licensees have found that their applications to erect smoking shelters can be

passed or rejected depending on which council has responsibility for the area, with at least one council attempting to ban smoking in outside areas as well. This has ominous implications for a ban in England, as local councils have already shown variability in their interpretation of the Licensing Act, and may apply interpretations to smoking legislation if the Government does



The Rose & Crown, opposite Chorleywood Common, now fully non-smoking

not produce clear guidelines on where smoking will be allowed. Such guidance has yet to be published, which makes it financially risky for publicans to build outdoor smoking shelters when they may not be allowed to use them. With the ban likely to come in next summer the trade is urging the Government to get its skates on.

So the current feeling within the main pub companies and trade bodies is that trade in pubs after a smoke ban may not be hit as severely as was first feared, but that pubs should take steps to mitigate any downturn in turnover ahead of time.

Two pubs in our CAMRA branch area have already taken the plunge and banned smoking ahead of national legislation. The well-known pub operator JD Wetherspoon took the decision to convert a number of pubs in its estate last year, one of which was the **Pennsylvanian** in Rickmansworth. Wetherspoon's experience has not been entirely positive, with takings falling by around 8% across the converted pubs; *Cont/d -*

a decline that may have been caused by their smoking customers choosing to frequent other pubs that do allow smoking, which is something they won't be able to do after a national ban. However food sales in the pubs rose by 10%, which hints that those pubs that can offer meals may be able to cope to some extent with the loss of their smoking customers. The fall in takings has persuaded Wetherspoon's not to convert any more pubs to non-smoking before a national ban comes into effect, although the company continues to open new non-smoking pubs. The second pub in our area that has gone fully non-smoking is the **Rose & Crown** opposite Chorleywood Common. Landlords Geoff and Rhonda Hall took the decision after the smoking-related death of a regular. Geoff has no regrets about stubbing out and believes it has increased trade, although he admits that the situation and clientele of the pub may have contributed to its success, and that other pubs may have different experiences after a ban.

So that's the current state of play according to the trade press and those local pubs that have already introduced a ban: Some apprehension on the part of English pub operators, cautiously positive reports from Scotland, and potential for pubs with land or food to exploit. The important thing to remember is that the only way to make sure business remains buoyant after a smoking ban is to support your local pub and keep drinking there.

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DOWN YOUR WAY

Albury: Punch Taverns have presented their plans to the local council and the planning authorities for the rebuilding of the **Catherine Wheel**, which was destroyed by fire in October 2004. All being well, the new building will be open for business by November this year.

Borehamwood: After the ASBO (on the whole pub) a court appearance and the pub being allowed to re-open by the judge, the **Woodcock** has been closed again. The pub was shut in April, this time by the Council, who are insistent that it will be for good.

Buntingford: There are now 8 handpumps in use at **Brambles**, and now available are three real ciders from Crones in Norfolk.

Burnham Green: The **White Horse** has a new manager, Chris Crosby, who started at the pub on 20th March. We give him a warm welcome and the pub is currently serving *Greene King IPA*, *Adnam's Bitter* and *Moorland Old Speckled Hen*.

Bricket Wood: The **Gate** is now owned by brewers Charles Wells. Paul Cooper is the Licensee. Sharon Stevens has taken on the **Fox & Hounds** (Punch). Together with her sister Sharon is improving the pub, with loos 'cared for', etc. A good range of pub food is available, and the beer range is *GK IPA* and a guest.

Chiswell Green: Derek Wyllie has contacted us about the **Three Hammers**, saying that standards are being maintained, by Cilla Palmer (landlady) on her range of 6 ever changing beers. Beers from Thwaites, Skinners, Fullers, Moorhouse, Young's, Titanic and Caledonian have been recently available.

Great Mundon: The **Harrow** is closed and appears to have been boarded up for quite a long time. Any further information will be gratefully received

Gustard Wood: We have been informed that the **Tin Pot** is up for sale again this time for a cool £1.5 million. No application for change of use of this grade II listed building has been applied for since the application made in 2004 was withdrawn. The pub was on the market for £900,000 at the time. Why has the price risen £600,000 in two years? As a pub it

is still not worth £900K, any answers or further information would be gratefully received.

Harpenden: After running the **Old Cock Inn** for 12 years as a managed house, Niki Hackett is now becoming the first lease holder for Punch Taverns from their new acquisition from the Spirit Group. Currently serving *Deuchars IPA* and three rotating guests, the pub will have a larger range of beers to order from. The **Peppercorn** has re-opened following refurbishment. The bar area has been retained, with *Wadworth's 6X*, *Fuller's London Pride*, and *Morland Old Speckled Hen* being served – all through sparklers, unfortunately.

Hertford: A new landlord has taken over the **Millstream**.

Hitchin: It is reported that the **Well** re-opened again in April, and the **Sailor Boy** in March.

London Colney: The **Bull** had a change of management on 1 Feb. The pub has been refurbished following a fire and regular beers are; *Black Sheep* and *Wadworth's 6X*, plus one guest.

Park Street: Peter Regan took over at The **Overdraught** (Punch) on 23 January 2006. Excellent *GK IPA* and *Abbot* were on offer when visited. Up the road at the **Falcon** (Greene King), Peter Collins is at the helm dispensing *GK IPA* or *Abbot* + a guest. Next door at the **Swan** (Fullers) bubbly landlady Marion Buckley took over in mid March. She is offering *London Pride* at the bargain price of £2 per pint.

Redbourn: We welcome Tim and Jane Pearson at the **Bull** (McMullen) who took over 14th March moving from the **East Herts Sports Club** (McMullen) near Puckeridge. They are intending to stock a guest beer. Tim and Jane also have an interest in the **Goat**, Codicote (McMullen) which is run by their daughter. There has been a change of management at the **Hollybush**..

Shenley: The **Black Lion** is selling *GK Abbot Ale* and *Fuller's London Pride*. The **William IV** is selling *Abbot Ale* but has unfortunately had to stop its guest beer due to lack of demand.

St Albans: The **Verulam Arms** has reopened following major structural work to extend the pub, see back page. The **Harrow** is now called '*Mokoko*' - which doesn't look promising. Some high tables/chairs were seen in there, which might suggest that it's not going to be only a restaurant. We doubt if it will have real ale. The **Black Lion**



has apparently been sold, and there's a new licensee at the **Blue Anchor**. Congratulations to David Worcester at the **White Lion**. He completed the London Marathon and has come third in the South Herts **Pub of the Year** competition. The **Cross Keys** closed from 2 – 11 May for a makeover and repaint. As we go to press we have been informed that there could be a public enquiry on the development of the **Mile House** site on 23 May.

Wheathampstead: A belated welcome to manager Steve Pascall and Wendy who took over the **Nelson** in January. The pub serves *GK IPA* and *Macs AK* along with two rotating guests. We believe Steve should do well, considering the **Swan** no longer sells real ale.

See you at the St. Albans Beer festival on Saturday 30 September! Or why not visit before? We open on Wednesday the 27th.



www.stalbansbeerfestival.com

Watford & District News:

Bushey Heath: The **Black Boy** has been advertised for sale.

Chorleywood: The **Old Shepherd** has been advertised for sale.

Croxley Green: The **Duke of York** is the subject of a planning application to demolish the pub and build flats and a house.

Heronsgate: Red Squirrel *Conservation* replaces Fuller's *London Pride* as regular best bitter at the **Land of Liberty, Peace & Plenty**. The latter was removed in protest at Fuller's closure of Gale's Horndean Brewery. Now that's campaigning!

Rickmansworth: Punch Taverns are selling the lease on the ex-Spirit Group's **Feathers**.

South Oxhey: The **Jet** has been refused a premises licence by Three Rivers Council after complaints from neighbours. Punch Taverns are selling the lease on the ex-Spirit Group **Pavilion**.

Watford: The **Bedford Arms** has been advertised for sale. Ex-Spirit Group pubs that Punch Taverns are selling leases on in the area: the **Robert Peel** and the **Verulam Arms**.

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BRANCH DIARY

WATFORD & DISTRICT

Sun 18 Jun: Quiz night at the Southern Cross, 41-43 Langley Road, Watford. Starts 9pm.

Mon 26 Jun: Branch meeting at the **Estcourt Arms**, St. John's Road, Watford, 8.15pm. All members welcome.

Thu 29 Jun: Breweriana Auction, **West Herts Sports Club** function room. **See page 12.**

Tue 4 Jul: Open Mike Night at the Colne River Room, **Pump House Theatre & Arts Centre**, Local Board Road, Watford, from 8.30pm.

Fri 14 Jul: Croxley Green social at the **Coach & Horses**, the **Green**, 8.30pm; **Artichoke**, the **Green**, 9.15pm; **Sportsman**, Scots Hill, 10pm.

Thu 20 Jul: Annual Darts Tournament, **West Herts Sports Club**, Park Avenue, Watford.

Sat 22 Jul: Sarratt Stagger starting at the **Cock**, Church Lane, Church End, Sarratt, 12.45pm. 352 bus from Watford Town Centre at Middyay.

Mon 31 Jul: Branch meeting at the **Estcourt Arms**, St John's Road, Watford, 8.15pm. All members welcome.

Fri 4 Aug: **Great British Beer Festival** social. Meet at membership stand every hour from 6pm. **See advert page 12.**

Branch contact: Andrew Vaughan. Phone: 01923 230104. Mobile: 07854 988152.

Email: branch@watfordcamra.org.uk

Internet: www.watfordcamra.org.uk

SOUTH HERTFORDSHIRE

Tue 13 June: Branch Meeting: **Cross Keys**, Harpenden 8pm.

Sat 8 July: **Derby Beer Festival** 9.00am - day trip to Derby £12.00 per by train £12.00 per person.

Tue 11 July: Branch Meeting, **Lower Red Lion**, St Albans, 8pm

Fri 14 July: **Boxmoor Beer Festival** Evening mini bus trip. Leaves St Albans City station 6.30pm. **See page 12.**

Tue 18 July: Ware Summer Saunter Visit to four pubs in Ware: **High Oak** - High Oak Rd 8 pm, **Albion** - Crib St. 8.45pm, **Vine** - High St. 9.30pm, **Waggers** - Kibes Lane 10.15pm.

Branch Contact: John Bishop 01582 768478,

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